

- **ROMANS 11:7-16! FRIENDS! This scripture is CHALLENGING! It is GOOD, we need to HEAR... but we are going to have to THINK, dig deep.**
- **If you missed past messages....**
- **WHAT'S our big theme? God is SOVEREIGN. In control. He is GOOD, and calls to us (Grace, Mercy) so that we may respond to him.**
- **Paul has walked us through this by addressing an issue that was HUGE for the first generation of believers, Question of ISRAEL.**
  - **Why didn't they believe in Jesus as messiah?**
  - **Has OT/Abrahamic covenant failed?**
  - **Last week- Since they didn't (as nation) believe, has God rejected them?**
  - **Paul says NO! God isn't through with Israel. Rather, in His Grace, chose a remnant to believe, from which the Gospel would spread throughout the world. Even Israel's unbelief is still part of God's plan.**
- **SO, picking up in verse 7, Paul turns to the question of Israel's unbelief- that Israel rejected Christ as the messiah because they were spiritually BLIND.**

#### † The problem of blindness

- **Read Verses 7-10. Okay, lets walk through it...**

**Romans 11:7-10** *What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain.*

- **They sought rightness with God. They sought it by the law, through their own effort. TRAGIC! GREAT EFFORT... but never could obtain it, because God's plan is to know him by FAITH, not religious or moral performance.**

*The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,*

- **REALITY Paul is driving home! In the case of Israel, some DID believe, by faith, In Christ. Many did not. NOT just happenstance. God's hand is at work here.**
- **Those who believed did so because God, in Grace, first called them to Himself. THOSE WHO DID NOT believe chose not to believe. As a result of their unbelief, their hearts were hardened against God's message of Gospel/grace. THIS IS KEY HERE. Their hearts were hardened because of their own unbelief... but in their unbelief, God's plan was that they would become spiritually blind.**
- **To make his case, Paul again quotes OT scripture- Deut, Isaiah.**

<sup>8</sup> as it is written: "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that could not see and ears that could not hear, to this very day."

- **HEAR... to understand this, we have to consider entire narrative up to this point. At end of Chapter 9, Paul told us that Israel had "stumbled"- they had not attained their goal of rightness with God, because they tried to get their by the LAW- by their own works and morality, not by FAITH.**
- **In the big picture of the history of Israel, Paul describes God responding to the Jews refusal to turn to him in Faith by causing them to reap the consequence of their own efforts, which is SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS. "Spirit of stupor"- condition/attitude- of deadness toward spiritual things. This was an attitude seen throughout history of OT, and Paul says that attitude persisted to the present day.**
- **ILLUSTRATION- picture of being drunk. A drunk person's senses are dulled. While this may account for their actions, they are still accountable, because it was their act of drinking too much that led to their condition. I can't say "I'm not to blame, I was drunk". I was drunk because I drank too much.**

- **LIKEWISE, for Israel, the inevitable consequence of their focus on LAW- their own works- was the spiritual blindness God gave them.**
- **Paul drives this home with another OT quote, this time from Psalm 69... where David is crying out in despair and desperation because his own people had turned against him (sounds like Elijah). With prophetic words, David asks God to punish his people...**

<sup>9</sup> And David says: “May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

<sup>10</sup> May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever.”

- **TABLE is metaphor for nourishment. For Israel, this was God’s provision for their spiritual sustenance- his work, teaching, scriptures. But because they had been misunderstood, distorted- what should have been a source of LIFE and RIGHTNESS with God, became a trap and a source of bondage. Rather than bringing freedom, their own scripture became a source of retribution- of consequence.**
- **What was the consequence? Spiritual blindness, and in this place of blindness, A LABOR THEY COULD NOT ESCAPE. THIS IS HUGE. David’s picture, brought into the present by Paul, is of a person bent over, laboring to carry a load they can’t bear. WHAT IS THIS? IT IS THE LAW. IT IS THE ATTEMPT TO BECOME RIGHT WITH GOD, to find the LIFE that only God can give, by our own effort, our own wisdom, APART FROM FAITH IN GOD CHRIST.**
- **Interesting detail- Psalm 69:21 “They put gall in my food and vinegar for my thirst”... sound familiar? The cross- vinegar/gall- this is picture of rejection of Christ.**
- **PRINCIPAL FOR US TODAY. Friends! This is the definition of the human condition around us. As human race, we are spiritually blind! Humanities problem isn’t that we aren’t seeking salvation from the struggle and brokenness of this life. WE ARE. Desperately. Just look around...**
- **OUR PROBLEM IS THAT WE ARE BLIND, we don’t have EYES OF FAITH to see our only hope, which is Christ. God’s grace! As a result, we labor in this life to find HOPE, FREEDOM, PEACE, - DELIVERANCE, LIFE- from our own resources, our own wisdom... IT IS NOT THERE. APART FROM GOD’S GRACE, THERE IS NO HOPE.**
- **BUT PRAISE BE TO GOD, Paul doesn’t stop there. Having laid out the plight of Israel- and human condition- we see that GOD IS STILL AT WORK, bringing the HOPE OF LIFE to the world through the greatest SIBLING RIVALRY in history.**

#### † Sibling Rivalry

**Romans 11:11-12** Again I ask: Did they (**Israel**) stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. <sup>12</sup> But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

- **First, there is HOPE. Israel has stumbled, but not completely fallen from God. She is still part of God’s plan. IN FACT- this is fascinating- the very act of Israel turning against Christ is still in God’s plan.**
- **Image of two children- siblings. Parent gives gift to first child... what is this? I don’t want this- casts gift aside. Parent gives to second child, who loves it, puts it to use. Over time, first child envious. “Hey! Look at that. That was mine! Give it back!**

- We see here History of God's plan for redemption of the world. GOD BROUGHT the Gospel to the Jews. As a nation, they rejected him (John 1). So, God took this precious gift of salvation – riches- and opened it to the gentiles- rest of humanity. But now that Salvation has come to the gentiles, what about the Jews? HERE WE SEE...

#### ✠ Why Israel Matters

- **SUBTLE, but critical... RICHES-** sense not of personal possession, but an exceeding abundance meant to be shared. Because Jews rejected the Gospel, the riches of salvation came to us. But these riches are meant to be SHARED. HERE WE SEE A GREAT MISSION FOR CHURCH- God's big picture plan for the world to be reconciled back to him- the purpose of the Gospel- will not be complete until Israel- as a nation- comes to faith in Christ.
- **THIS WILL HAPPEN** When Israel SEES IN US the true richness of faith in Christ, so that she may see what she missed, and fully receive Gospel.
- **At this point Paul turns specifically to the gentiles in the church, showing his great passion for his people.**

**Romans 11:13-14** *I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry<sup>14</sup> in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them.*

- **God calls for us to share God's passion for Israel. TRAGIC REALITY-** Over last 2000 years, at times, in some places, anti-Semitism has thrived within the church, pushing Israel away from the gospel. IT SHOULD NOT BE. GOD'S COVENANT TO ABRAHAM was that ALL WORLD would be blessed through what God would do through Israel. AND THIS FULL BLESSING TO THE WORLD will happen when Israel receives the GOSPEL, because of how they see the RICHNESS of the gospel IN US.
- **PAUL SAYS... WHEN THIS HAPPENS, it will be...**

#### ✠ Life from the Dead!

**Romans 11:15-16** *For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?<sup>16</sup> If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.*

- **If (meaning fact), God set Israel aside in order to bring reconciliation to rest of the world, HE will also accept them back-** where before there was a 'spirit of stupor'- spiritual deadness, there will be LIFE. Many think this points to END TIMES... very well may be. But Paul doesn't say that- his point is that when the world SEES Israel turning to Christ, NOT ONLY will this be Israel coming alive spiritually, LIFE FROM THE DEAD will describe what God will do in the rest of the world as well.
- **WE SEE** the power of Gospel in the world... God is saying... the GREATEST BLESSING, that we have not yet seen, will be when my people return to me.
- **Paul caps this with verse 16-** without explaining, this is reference to Abraham, the beginning of God's work through Israel. Paul reminds the church that God set Israel apart (holy, firstfruits) from the beginning, that Israel is rooted in his promise to Abraham, and therefore, Israel is STILL SET APART and part of God's plan for how world will believe
- **BACK TO US-** this is message of hope.
- We see people rejecting God all around us.
- We may wonder if God is with us
- **BUT GOD IS AT WORK.** The story is not over. WE NEVER KNOW how God will use us...
- **CONSIDER** great story we are caught up in! Your part matters... how we are experiencing... and reflecting